CHAPTER 3

Site Selection

Site Selection

The board and the district have agreed that a new school will best suit the needs of the district and the community. Now, where will it be built? One of the first tangible decisions to be made when building a new school is the selection of the site. The site selection process can be one of the most time consuming, costly, and frustrating processes in the development of the project. Often, it can be the process that is most overlooked and hastily approached. Whether there is lack of planning funds or an unwillingness to thoroughly investigate a potential site, the consequences of a poorly selected site can delay the project for months, even years. Months of hard work developing a floor plan, obtaining adequate financing, and building community support can be quickly jeopardized when it is realized that the site just recently purchased will require extensive development to make the school functional. The cost of the site development might be so extensive that the project suddenly becomes less attractive to the community.

This chapter will outline the steps necessary to properly select and develop an "ideal" site. The importance of locating and purchasing a buildable site is critical to a successful project. That flat piece of farm land or that vacant urban lot may appear to be the perfect location for a new school; however, there are many elements that must be investigated and plotted on a site plan to determine if the site will meet the necessary engineering criteria to be cost effective to the school district for school construction development.

The process to select a site can be summed up in six fundamental steps:

- Select the site search team.
- Ensure commitment of services.
- Search for suitable sites.
- Develop a list of necessary criteria for the site.
- Develop a list of undesirable site criteria.
- Evaluate selected sites.
- Acquire the most feasible site.

This chapter will discuss each of these items in detail in order to assist the district in selecting the most efficient and cost effective site for school construction development. More than likely, the ideal site will not exist. Selection of the site will be determined by the best compromise of many factors, the importance of which will be decided by the school district.

I. SELECTING SITE SEARCH TEAM MEMBERS

The school district will need to assemble a comprehensive site search team. The following list is a suggestive, but certainly not an exhaustive, list of individuals which may be included as part of the search team. The lead evaluator on the selection team should be a civil engineer. The civil engineer's expertise in site evaluation will be critical to the success of the site selection team. The civil engineering consultant may be hired directly by the district or could be selected by the school district's architect. The team should first establish the scope of the project and the general site availability within the district. Depending on the scope, the team members may assume more than one role. With more complex projects, the school district may choose to hire additional specialized subconsultants. All members of the team should be selected as early in the process as possible. The team should be allowed to rank the site criteria based on the needs conveyed by the school district.

Civil Engineer (Team Leader)

The selected civil engineering firm should have expertise in the following areas, or employ specialized consultants in these disciplines, if the complexity of the project warrants.

- Transportation
- Drainage
- Utilities
- Land survey
- Geotechnical
- Environmental
- Cultural resources

School Administration Representative

The school district will need to appoint a representative who can devote the necessary time to work with the team and understand the basics of site acquisition.

Legal Consultant

The school district's legal counsel will be a critical member of the team. Throughout the site selection process, legal issues will need to be addressed. Some sites may quickly be disregarded, due to unsolvable legal matters. The legal counsel will need expertise in land acquisition, as well as knowledge about construction law and standards. Some extreme cases may require the need to hire additional counsel with such expertise.

Real Estate Appraiser

The use of a licensed appraiser early in the selection process can be helpful. The district will want to know the market value of a property as soon as possible. Many

sites could be removed from the list, due to excessive pricing demands from the seller. The appraiser may be able to assist in identifying other properties as potential sites. Daily involvement with real estate professionals will provide an insight and feel for the sellers who have property that might be of interest to the school district.

Architectural Representative

The architect is usually the first person selected for the project team. The amount of land required for the project depends on the size of the building footprint and the associated outdoor areas to be developed. The architect will provide the civil engineer with a site plan of the building and green areas which will be required. The architect must be intimately involved in the selection process because compromises in site selection will directly affect the design of the building. Conversely, the architect will need to keep the selection team aware of changes in the building design that will affect the criteria prioritized in selecting the site.

Community Representative

During the site selection process, it will be necessary to gauge the sentiment of the public to see if they will buy into the project. A key figure from the community can help in many ways. A person who understands the needs and the politics of the community can advise the school district as to the direction the site selection team needs to focus. The person may also be able to suggest potential sites and approach the potential sellers.

Local Government Representative

The team may require the involvement of a representative(s) from one of the following agencies:

- Municipal
- County
- Planner
- Engineer
- Park District
- Sanitary District
- Water District
- Township

II. ENSURE COMMITMENT OF SERVICES

In almost all projects, the school board will have to depend upon other agencies to provide services which the school board cannot provide on its own. It is very important that the school board be aware of the multitude of special purpose agencies that operate in its area. No site acquisition should be finalized or public referendum campaign begun until the board has firm commitments from governing bodies of participating agencies.

In Illinois, a selected site could conceivably need water from the municipality, sewer service from a wastewater district, park access from a park district, fire protection from a fire protection district, drainage from a drainage district, library access from a library

district, pest control from a mosquito control district, health services from a hospital district, and several other sources of services that would be required by the school district. The board should ensure that staff negociate agreements for services with each overlying authority and that the governing body of each authority, by resolution, provide assurance of terms before it begins the referendum campaign. It must be emphasized that agreements should be in writing and that such commitments should be obtained as early as possible.

III. SEARCH FOR SUITABLE SITES

Once the site search team is assembled, the task of locating potential sites begins. The process can be time consuming and expensive depending on the complexity of site issues facing the school district. Searches that take time and cost money should not necessarily be considered poorly implemented or a waste of the taxpayers money. The district has selected the civil engineer (with assistance from the architect) who will advise on the amount of time and money to spend on this process. The locating of potential sites may involve simply identifying a few flat agricultural parcels similar in make-up or may involve a complex identification of urban sites with no similarities and numerous compromising issues. The burden will ultimately rest with the school district to decide how much effort should be expended by the site search team.

Confidentiality Issues

Although very important in the process of site selection, spending public funds for a school site is very rarely confidential. When word gets out that the district is looking for land, prices may escalate. The team should be committed to confidentiality and do their best to avoid misinformation being made public.

Identification and Evaluation of Several Sites by Civil Engineer

As stated earlier, the civil engineer will provide the majority of the input necessary to make the best site selection. Utility and earthwork estimates should be provided for each potential site and compiled in a manner for easy review by each team member.

Availability of Funds for Site Purchase and Development

In order for the site selection committee to make the most intelligent and cost effective site choice, it is imperative that the school district be honest with the team on the amount and availability of funds budgeted for site purchase and development.

Cost of Site Environmental Assessment / Historic Preservation Assessment Verses Risk of not Assessing

The Illinois Environmental Protection Agency (IEPA) now requires that a Phase I Environmental Study be completed on any proposed school construction site prior to the start of construction. In addition, the Illinois Historic Preservation Agency (IHPA) requires submittal of information regarding the site. Completing this study as early as possible, will help avoid potential delays in starting construction, should environmental / historic issues be discovered.

Cost of Site Evaluation Process
Although a considerable amount of time and money can be spent on the site evaluation process, in the long run it is well worth the effort and expense. To have a new school in a location that the entire community can be proud of will speak well for many years.

Demolition of Existing Structures on Property
When considering a site that contains existing structures, several issues can arise especially if the existing structure is the old original school that the entire community attended. Historic significance and sentimental emotions can be quite strong in some communities. Most older structures may contain asbestos that must be abated prior to demolition. Contaminated soils may be encountered from leaky underground storage tanks. All these items will add significant cost to site development

Purchase of Adjoining Property for Expansion
The site selected may be suitable for the school and play areas today, but what about future growth? Consideration should be given to purchasing adjacent property for future expansion, especially in urban areas where availability of land is scarce.

Evaluate Sites by Ranking Site Selection Criteria
In order to make the most intelligent and cost efficient site selection, the team should develop a ranking and scoring system for each site based on the input provided by the district. Each design criteria should be prioritized according to the best interest of the district and community and scored. A total can be tabulated for each site.

IV. NECESSARY SITE CRITERIA

Establish the Building Footprint
In order to determine the size of the site needed, the selection team needs to know the design footprint of the proposed building or buildings. The building footprint and the number of floors are based on educational criteria. The desired floor plan should be formulated by the architect and the school district in concept and communicated to the civil engineer, who will then evaluate the minimum acreage needed. A school district located in an urban area may need to be flexible in regard to the number of stories desired in the proposed building. By developing a floor plan that lends itself to single or multi-story, the school district retains some flexibility in selecting a site when criteria other than size become the highest priority (hence, reducing the need for costly redesigns). It is important that the conceptual size of the building be as close to the final design as possible. One of the biggest mistakes made in site selection is choosing a site based on a very preliminary design footprint, one that when built is not anywhere near the size (large or small) of that originally proposed. This can result in not buying enough land, or buying too much land. It could also result in the most efficient and cost effective site being rejected because of lack of planning in the design phase.

Determine Parking Requirements
The minimum parking requirements for a particular building's intended use are usually governed by state and local codes. As with most school projects, the minimum parking

requirements per code, will fall far short of the desired number of spaces needed for staff, students, parents, and community functions. To determine if a site is viable, the area required for parking must be established. The following list, while not exhaustive, includes the most common groups that may require parking spaces.

- *Staff:* Obviously, the employees working in the school building need a place to park. One parking space is generally provided for each employee. Often in urban areas there is a requirement that off-street parking must be provided for employees. Staff can include teachers, administrators, clerical, kitchen, teacher aides, maintenance, part-time educational specialists (e.g., social workers and psychologists).
- *Students:* High school students in the upper grades may desire to park vehicles at the school. The amount of parking needed for the students may be substantial and will probably exceed the number of staff parking needed. Parking for students not only requires more land, it also requires more money for pavement. The school district needs to make or review its policy regarding student parking. The most common practice for high schools is to design student parking based on one space for every five students enrolled.
- *Public:* Providing parking for community and school events can be very important to the school district. In many communities, the school may function as the civic center for many night time activities. Parking spaces for the community can be a very expensive. Innovative design and shared use areas can minimize the cost. Bus unloading areas and student parking can be utilized after hours for public parking. Also, if the local park district is simultaneously building an adjacent playground and park, there may be an opportunity for the school district to share the cost of land and pavement with the park district.
- *Parents:* The school district may be expected to provide a limited number of spaces for parents who visit the school during normal business hours. The number of spaces for parent parking is subject to the needs of the individual school.
- *Buses:* Buses require extensive pavement for unloading and turn-arounds. The pavement design for these areas should be substantially heavier than normal parking lot pavement. It is considered a safe and desirable practice to separate the bus unloading area from the parking and car drop-off areas. Factors to be considered include the number of buses to park and the length of drive needed to reach the entrance to the school.
- *Visitors (athletic teams, educational support persons, etc.):* Although these spaces could be considered in the public parking calculation, many of these activities may run concurrently with normal school hours, resulting in a potential shortage of parking for a small duration of time.

Outdoor Athletic Facilities

Playing fields will add substantially to the amount of land needed to locate the new school. The area required will often be larger than the building and paved areas combined. The school district should assess current and future needs in order to determine the amount of play areas needed. Development of grass play areas may seem inexpensive (fine grading and seeding); however, hidden costs can include excessive earthwork to adjust the topography and increased requirements in storm water detention. Competition fields will also require subsurface drainage and may also include in-ground irrigation.

Storm Water Detention

The size and the use of the land will dictate the storm water detention capacity needed to satisfy applicable agency codes. Rural areas may be subjected to requirements when storm water runoff is directed to public ditches and storm sewers. Increases in building footprints and paved areas will increase the capacity of storm water detention. Such increases in capacity may not be available through conventional design (open basins) and expensive underground detention (e.g., piped storage under parking areas) may be required to allow the site to remain feasible. In some cases, especially in urban areas, there is not a practical or economical solution to detention. In this case, the site may have to be considered inadequate and another site may have to be evaluated.

Open Spaces

It is important not to overlook the need for open space. Beyond play fields, open spaces can include areas affected by building setbacks and future building expansion. Open spaces can be expensive to develop and maintain. Donated land that is substantially larger than needed for the proposed school can use up the limited site development budget. School districts that are developing a future campus to hold multiple schools on one site may need to spend substantial site development money up front to adjust the topography of the property and meet codes such as increased storm water detention due to the larger property.

Public Parks

Local intergovernmental cooperation can be of great benefit to a school district. The sharing of recreational space and paved parking can give the community more value for its tax dollars. It is common for school districts to provide paved parking and drives, while the park districts provide athletic fields and green space. Park districts and municipalities may be able to participate in multi-purpose rooms and field houses located in the school building in return for nightly availability of facilities to the public. Shared property is common in situations where housing developers are required to donate land for parks and schools. A school district should work closely with the park district and its municipality to draft ordinances that require developers to donate shared land if the area is subjected to fast growth.

Playgrounds

Paved and nonpaved playgrounds require sizeable space. The site selection process will need to consider the outdoor use of the land for students.

Nonusable Areas

Nonusable areas can either increase the amount of acreage needed or may render the site unuseable. Careful consideration must be made when evaluating these spaces. Criteria for developing these areas usually are established by local and state governing agencies. The school district would be well advised to investigate these matters thoroughly before any purchase commitments are made. To do otherwise, could cost the district large sums of money and may cause unnecessary delays in starting the site development. Types of nonusable areas include:

- *Wetlands:* Mitigation may require acreage that is unavailable.
- *Flood Plains:* Buildings should not be built in flood plains. It may be permissible to build play fields in such areas. Local requirements should be investigated.

- *Out Lots:* Areas of land which may be required outside of the primary parcel of land for additional play fields and/or parking lots.
- *Zoning Setbacks:* These areas should be calculated and added to the amount of acreage needed for the school site.
- Easements: Easements, like zoning setbacks, need to be added to the amount of acreage needed. Sometimes easements can prevent a building from being constructed on a site, due the easement location. Extensive legal investigation may be required to identify potential conflicts.
- *Rights-of-Way:* Street and highway departments should be consulted to identify the location and space requirements of rights-of-way. The possibility of future road development can be of benefit to the district or it could be an additional cost if the local governing agency requires monetary participation for the development.

Roads and Secure Access

Access to the property is an important consideration. The property should be accessed from a road that can carry heavy traffic such as school buses. If this is not the case, will the school district have to pay for the necessary road improvements?

Topography

Is the site relatively level with adequate drainage or very hilly requiring substantial earthwork grading? Does the site contain a major drainage swale or ditch that runs through the middle of the property? Such situations may not render a site unusable but may require expensive site development to provide level areas for the building, parking, and play fields.

Proximity of Site to the Geographic Center of the School District or to the Population Growth Area

The location of the site will need to satisfy political as well as engineering requirements. The ideal site, based on technical analysis, may be less desirable due to its location. In order to pass a referendum, the school district will need to investigate the needs of the community. Does the community want neighborhood schools that may be located on small sites that children can walk to, or will the citizens place a greater importance on ample acreage for large play fields and adequate parking. These are just a few of the compromises that will have to be considered when evaluating a site. In order to successfully market a referendum, the school district must make these decisions early and will need to involve the public as early as possible when choosing a site.

The Need for Future Expansion on the Site

The school district will have to develop a long range plan if the site will be used for future expansion. Will another new school be added in the future? Will the site be a campus with future schools built adjacent to the currently planned building? Answers to these questions will affect the amount of acreage needed for the site.

Bus Routing

The number of buses and the route they drive on the property can greatly affect the amount of acreage needed. The trend by most districts is to separate the bus unloading area from the parking and car unloading areas. Safety is the obvious consideration in this design practice. The downside to this is the need for more acreage and more

pavement. The civil engineer should be provided with the school district's transportation plan so that the bus traffic needs can be understood and be included in the site selection process.

Suitable Soil Quality and Foundation

One of the investigations that frequently is not pursued early in the project is soil borings. Soil borings are taken randomly around a potential site and consist of a drilled shaft of earth. The earth sample is then analyzed for bearing capacity and moisture content. The ability for the soil to provide adequate foundation-bearing capacity for the building is extremely important in the selection of the site. A site with poor soil conditions could require very expensive special foundations. In some extreme cases, the building of a school on certain poor soils is just not feasible. Too many school districts find out too late that the site selected has soils with inadequate foundation-bearing capacity. Soil borings are relatively inexpensive compared to special foundations, and results of the investigation can be obtained in a short amount of time. The school district should direct its civil engineer to employ the services of a geotechnical consultant to obtain soil information as early in the project development as possible. When purchasing property, the district may place a contingency on the sale subject to a favorable soil boring analysis. The school district may still decide to build on a property that requires soil remediation. Understanding the cost involved with soil remediation is important in budgeting for the project. Districts that have failed to investigate soil early in the selection process have been subjected to unplanned costs exceeding hundreds of thousands of dollars.

Environmental Assessment

Any site selected for school construction development must have a Phase I Environmental Study performed for the site, per the IEPA. The school district will need to hire an environmental engineering consultant to properly evaluate the environmental condition of a property. The cost to correct hazardous conditions could be substantial or may render a site useless to the school district.

Historical Preservation Assessment

For any site selected for school construction, the school district must submit site information to the IHPA to determine if a Phase I assessment will be required. The Agency will determine whether or not the district will need to hire an archeological consultant to evaluate the historic value of a property. The cost to assess and preserve historic artifacts could be substantial and may render a site undesirable to the school district.

Proximity to Airports, Railroads or Factories (potential noise and air pollution sources)

Political, as well as technical issues, must be evaluated when locating next to such areas. The school district may have no alternative, especially in urban areas, but to locate adjacent to these areas. The understanding of future development of nearby properties will help a district avoid selecting a property that may be unsuitable for school activities at a later date. For this reason, the district would be wise to involve planning commissions and municipalities in the site selection process.

Proper Zoning of Site and Appropriate Zoning of Adjacent Sites

Improper zoning can slow the development of a school site. Building next to property

zoned for incompatible usage can be undesirable and can cause community resistance. An early understanding of such issues will be valuable to the school district during the selection process.

Availability of Utilities

The school district should consider the issue of utilities when deciding on the feasibility of a site. Are utilities available? If not, is the cost of running utilities to the site prohibitive? Will the local water and sewer municipality provide assistance in bringing utilities to the site? Do the local utilities have adequate capacities to meet the need for sanitary sewer service, drinking water, sprinkler systems, fire hydrant flows, electrical requirements, telephone, and information services connections? To avoid potential delays and costs to the project, any commitments by utility companies regarding the availability of service should be put in writing. Are there developer incentives to consider? The cost of providing utilities to a potential site can be very costly.

User Friendly Site to Public at Large

Will the school project fit the overall needs of the community? Or, will the project create long term zoning and development issues that burden the community for years to come? Will the site selected create parking problems, traffic congestion in quiet neighborhoods or require long bus routes? These matters should carry a significant importance in the site selection process.

Cost of Site and Total Project Budget

All of the above items contribute to the cost and feasibility of a school site. By identifying and understanding these items, the school district can develop a realistic cost budget. With such information, a sound decision can be made when choosing the site.

V. UNDESIRABLE SITE CONDITIONS

While it is important to decide those items desirable in a site, it is equally important to consider items that are undesirable. Considering the following items could greatly assist the district in preparing a short list of potential sites. The selection team will need to prioritize the list and decide how much of an impact the presence of any of the items will make on the decision to select a particular site. The following list should not be considered all-inclusive.

Oil Wells

The presence of wells can involve easement, hazardous waste, and foundation design issues.

Gas Wells

Similar to oil wells as a detriment to selecting a suitable site.

Mines and Quarries

- *Strip Mines:* Issues include environmental land reclamation.
- *Underground Mines:* Potential mine subsidence should be a concern of the school district. Expensive drill testing may have to be performed in order to build on a site with a known underground mining history. Mining maps are generally available but not always accurate. Some school districts have successfully built on mining sites but have spent additional funds to avoid damage due to subsidence.

Sinkholes

These occurrences may or may not be related to underground mining. The presence of sinkholes in the area near the site should be of concern and should be investigated by a geotechnical consultant with expertise in that field.

High Pressure Gas or Oil Lines

A school built next to one of these lines can be an extreme hazard to students in the case of a rupture or explosion. A site containing these items should be avoided if at all possible. If not, extreme care should be used in locating the footprint of the school and location of easements should be investigated.

Fiber Optic Lines

The presence of fiber optics could be helpful for a new school that is utilizing the latest in technology. The downside is the location of the lines and potential encroachment on established easements.

High Voltage Electrical Lines

These lines present several hazards for the school site. Electric and magnetic fields produced by the high voltage have been a public health concern for some time. The potential for downed lines and poles in high winds or ice storms presents yet another hazard. Easements can prevent optimal utilization of the property. Politically, high voltage lines can easily be seen by the community and, therefore, can cause the refusal of the taxpayers to accept the site as the place to locate a new school.

Flood Plains

Although some entire communities are located in a flood plain, these areas should be avoided. Many laws and grant provisions prohibit building in such areas.

Railroads and Commuter Lines

Railroad and/or commuter lines located adjacent to a potential school site could raise safety, noise, and vibration issues. Community objection should also be considered. There could always be the possibility of derailment and/or hazardous material spills associated with rail traffic.

Highways

A site adjacent to or near a major highway or interstate could cause noise and traffic problems. On state highways, deceleration lanes and traffic signals are normally required to be installed. Although this work may be performed by the Illinois Department of Transportation (IDOT), the cost for such work will be the responsibility of the district. Other highway improvements may also be required by IDOT, due to increased vehicle traffic.

Airports
Locating a new school near an airport or in the path of local flight patterns can cause a substantial cost increase in construction, due to Federal Aviation Authority (FAA) regulations for sound control. Special windows and additional sound proofing insulation may be required depending on the proximity of the school to the airport and its flight patterns.

Radio and Communication Towers
A site containing radio and communication towers should be avoided. The potential for wind or lightning collapsing a tower and damaging the school or causing student injury is always possible. The school district may also realize increased insurance premiums because of the increased potential for damage or injury.

Mineral Leases and/or Rights
Issues of this nature should be discussed with the district's legal counsel.

Previous Developments, Buildings or Foundations
Investigating a site should include research on whether or not there was previous development or buildings on the site which may have been demolished. Common practice in building demolition is to leave the existing foundations in place and backfill any basement areas with the building rubble. If this condition is known or suspected, soil borings should be taken and analyzed prior to purchase of the site. Expensive foundation work and/or earthwork may be required for the site to be suitable for new school construction.

Noise Environment
This issue should be considered and addressed by both the district and the surrounding community. Industrial and manufacturing operations in the area of the proposed site could cause noise problems for the student population. The community may be concerned with the noise generated by the outdoor activities of the student population.

VI. EVALUATE AND COMPARE SUITABLE SITES

Based on the prioritized site criteria, the site search team will need to propose a short list of sites to the school district. The short list of properties will then need to be evaluated in detail. This process will involve determining the advantages and disadvantages of each property. The team will then need to decide how well each site will work based on the needs identified by the school district. Each site will most likely create the need for compromising the layout of the proposed school building. The school district and its architect will play an important role in this step because, in some instances, there may be a need to redesign the floor plan or reduce the amount of outdoor athletic facilities desired. Once the sites are further short listed, then the site or sites can be identified as those to be considered for purchase.

Evaluate Each Site Based on Site Criteria List
As mentioned earlier, the team should develop a ranking and scoring system for each site based on the input provided by the school district. Each design criteria should be

prioritized according to the best interest of the district and community and scored. A total can be tabulated for each site and a ranking assigned. Discussion could then be generated as to the most desirable site.

Cost to Develop Each Site

Cost estimates for the development of each site should be prepared by the civil engineer. Cost of development should be only one of the criteria used to select the site. Many other factors need to be evaluated.

Issues of Compromise with Each Site

The ideal site more than likely does not exist. Issues that may need to be compromised could include the number of stories for the building, the number of outdoor play fields, the geographic location within the community, cost verses value, future growth and expansion, etc. The entire selection team should be allowed to provide input in this area.

VII. SITE ACQUISITION

The acquisition process will be the most expensive of all of the steps in selecting the site best suited for the school district. Any offer made should be based on contingencies. The offer should be contingent upon comprehensive investigations regarding soil quality, legal issues, and other considerations that may render the site either useless or too expensive to develop. Up-front cost to evaluate a site for suitability is money well spent. With site development, unforseen conditions become the basis for costly change orders and lengthy litigation. The district should be wary of deciding not to perform tests and evaluations based on cost alone. It is very important that all issues be identified and/or resolved prior to closing the purchase of the property. Any other contingencies that are not site related will also need to be identified. These may include the passage of a referendum or the award of a matching fund grant. All language included in the offer should be prepared by the school district's legal counsel.

Make Offer Based on Contingencies

Any opening offer proposed for a particular property should be tied to certain contingencies. Contingencies protect the district from incurring excessive additional expenses should investigative reports, such as soil borings, come back with unfavorable results. The contingencies included in the offer should be developed by the civil engineering consultant and the school district's legal counsel. Listed below are specific contingencies that may be included in the offer.

- *Perform Environmental Assessment:* Any site being proposed for school construction is now required by the IEPA to have a Phase I Environmental Study performed on the property prior to the start of construction. The results of this study should be part of the contingencies included in the initial offer.
- *Perform Historic Preservation Assessment:* The IHPA requires notification of the site to be considered for the new school. The intent of this notification is to allow for the identification of any historical significance that is related to the site.

- *Complete Geotechnical Investigation:* Geotechnical investigation is basically the evaluation of soil borings. This report will include such items as the amount of soil bearing pressure available and the moisture content of the soil samples. It will also include information as to soil types encountered and at what depths they are located and the presence of water and at what depth it is encountered. A site with a high water table may require special deep foundations thus adding additional cost to the project.
- *Perform Topographic Survey:* This document is prepared by a licensed surveyor and will indicate the elevation changes (hills and valleys) across the entire site. From this survey, the amount of earthwork to be performed (cut and fill) can be determined. This document will also allow the architect to determine the floor elevation of the proposed building so proper drainage can be established.
- *Perform Property Survey:* This document is also prepared by a licensed surveyor and will include the legal description of the property and the location of all property lines, utility locations, easements, right-of-ways and owners of adjacent properties.
- *Determine Zoning:* Property zoning issues are usually administered through the city, village, or county clerk. All zoning restrictions should be on file and recorded. The school district's legal counsel should be involved in these matters in the event any zoning changes or amendments need to filed with the clerk of court's office.
- *Annexation Issues:* These issues should be handled by the school district's legal counsel. Early planning with the involvement of city and village officials will help clarify any potential problems in this area.
- Appraisal Before Purchase: An appraisal is the best way to assure that the district is receiving a fair price for the parcel being offered. The appraisal takes into account the current market conditions and the selling price of similar properties in the area.
- *Negotiation and Acceptance:* It may take several negotiating meetings with the seller to reach an agreement on the purchase price for the selected property. Patience is very important. To break off negotiations over trivial matters provides a set-back for the entire team, delays the project, and deflates enthusiasm.
- *Title Commitment and Insurance:* After the purchase and acceptance is established, the school district's legal counsel will become involved in obtaining the title commitment and title insurance. These documents insure the school district that the property is free and clear of any judgements or liens.